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AUTHOR Wallace, Sherry
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ABSTRACT

The prekindergarten program in the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) is described. The program was developed to meet the needs of disadvantaged four year old children. Students were chosen with respect to age, residence in a Chapter I attendance area, and a low score on the Preschool Screening Evaluation (PSE). Areas of learning included visual, auditory, motor, and language skills. The structure of classes with preschool teachers and teacher aides is also described. The PSE was used as a pretest and posttest to measure achievement of program objectives. Sustained effect studies indicated students with prekindergarten experience scored higher than comparable students on kindergarten and grade one Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. The prekindergarten program was judged to have consistently demonstrated outstanding achievement of its objectives. Positive academic effects of the FWISD prekindergarten program were sustained at least through grade one. It is recommended that continued expansion of the program should use one of the approved differentiated staffing patterns. (DWH)

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PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM
1983-84

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

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FORT WORTH INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM
1983-84

Sherry Wallace, Evaluator

Dan Powell, Director
Department of Planning, Research and Evaluation

October 1984

ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM
1983-84

OWNER'S CODE: 526
COST OF PROGRAM: $2,604,483
NUMBER OF PUPILS: 1,694
STAFF: 68 Teachers
88 Aides

COST PER PUPIL: $1,537
FUNDING SOURCE: Chapter I
SCHOOLS: 29 (See back for listing)

DESCRIPTION: The prekindergarten classes usually had 22 four year olds, one teacher and an aide. In differentiated staffing, classes had two aides with one teacher (33 students), or two aides per classroom (22 students) with one teacher supervising two or more classrooms. Structured lessons were limited to one hour per day and were provided in small groups. Areas of learning included visual, auditory, motor and language skills. Generally, the teachers and aides taught four groups daily.

POPULATION SERVED: Pupils who were: 1) four years olds prior to September 1, 1983, 2) resided in a Chapter I attendance area and 3) scored seven or less items correct on the Preschool Screening Evaluation (PSE).

OBJECTIVES: There were two objectives: 1) students would show pre to post gains as measured by items correct on the PSE, and 2) Early Childhood Specialists would promote parent involvement by working with the teachers in developing skills in parent-teacher conferences, providing newsletters, brochures and handouts for parents and teachers.

RESEARCH FINDINGS: The prekindergarten students attained, on the average, 90% of the program objectives. The objectives were measured pre to post with the Prekindergarten Screening Evaluation. The mean pretest score was four and the mean posttest score was nine out of the ten items measured. The results were exactly the same as the last two years. The prekindergarten program was expanded to serve 344 more children while reducing the cost per child by $97.00. The reduction in cost per pupil was accomplished by increasing class size from 20 to 22 and using more instructional aides supervised by a teacher. Sustained effect studies show students with prekindergarten experience scored an average of one month higher than comparable students on kindergarten and grade one ITBS.

CONCLUSION: The prekindergarten program has consistently demonstrated outstanding achievement of the objectives. The prekindergarten program was expanded to serve more students while reducing the overall cost per child. Positive academic effects of the FWISD prekindergarten program are sustained at least through grade one.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Continued expansion of prekindergarten classes should use one of the approved differentiated staffing patterns. Special training for aides and staff should be provided regularly, so that as classes are added, highly qualified staff will be available. It is further recommended that the Early Childhood Specialists concentrate staff training in those schools which feld one point or more below the district mean gain on the Preschool Screening Evaluation.

Program Manager: Anna Perez
Evaluator: Sherry Wallace
Date: October 1984

Prekindergarten Classes in Schools:

#03 Worth Heights
#07 Morningside
#08 DeZavala
#09 Charles Nash
#10 E. M. Daggett
#12 Sam Rosen
#14 M. G. Ellis
#15 Denver Ave.
#18 George Clarke
#20 D. McRae
#25 Diamond Hill
#26 Washington Heights
#27 W. J. Turner
#33 Hubbard
#42 H. V. Helbing
#43 S. S. Dillow
#50 Glen Park
#55 Mitchell Blvd.
#57 M. H. Moore
#61 Eastland
#67 A. M. Pate
#71 Kirkpatrick
#73 Como
#75 Versia Williams
#76 Maude Logan
#78 Maudrie M. Walton
#79 Van Zandt-Guinn
#81 Sunrise
#82 Carroll Peak

PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM
1983-84

HOW WERE THE FOUR-YEAR-OLD STUDENTS IDENTIFIED?

The Prekindergarten Program was placed in schools where larger proportions of students were on free or reduced lunch. Letters were sent to parents to announce the program. Students who registered for prekindergarten provided a birth certificate proving they were four years old as of September 1, and were given the Prekindergarten Screening Evaluation. Students who were four years old and scored seven or less on the ten objectives tested were enrolled in a prekindergarten class on a space-available basis.

WHY WAS THE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM SELECTED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN?

The FWISD Prekindergarten Program was developed fourteen years ago to meet the needs of disadvantaged preschoolers. The program has been revised and expanded and has consistently demonstrated impact on achievement of four-year-olds. Research has shown that when a high quality preschool is provided, disadvantaged children increase their chances of higher academic performance, lower delinquency rates, and better earning prospects.

HOW WAS THE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM IMPLEMENTED?

Twenty-nine Chapter I schools provided services for 1,694 educationally disadvantaged four-year-old children during the 1983-84 year. Most of the prekindergarten classes consisted of 22 youngsters, a teacher, and an instructional aide. One Chapter I school (#73) used a differentiated staffing pattern of one teacher and six aides to serve sixty-six prekindergarten students. Three Chapter I schools (#03, #10, and #75) used the staffing pattern with one teacher and two aides to serve 33 prekinder-

garten students. Three sites (#20, #78, and #81) had one teacher and three aides to serve 44 students and one site (#71) had one teacher and 4 aides to serve 55 students. Schedule for the six-hour day included both academic and experiential activities.

The prekindergarten curriculum focused on development of skills in four major areas: auditory, visual, motor, and language processes. Academic instruction was limited to approximately one hour per day and the rest of the school day was devoted to independent activities in learning centers, outdoor activities, and creative activities in art and music. Instructional groups were small, consisting of no more than five children. Support services were provided by the Early Childhood Specialists and Home-School Coordinators.

A portion of four Early Childhood Specialists' time was funded with Chapter I monies. Each specialist kept a calendar to document the services supplied to the prekindergarten students and teachers. Services included curriculum workshops, demonstration teaching, assistance in purchase of materials, and assistance to new teachers in setting up learning centers. The Early Childhood Specialists visited each prekindergarten teacher a minimum of two times during the school year. The specialists provided the following publications to teachers:

1) Handbook for Teachers of Prekindergarten Students,

2) How to Have a Successful Parent-Teacher Conference, handout for parents,

3) Home Helps, packet of parent handouts that accompany prekindergarten report cards, and

4) Yellow Balloon newsletter.

Several comments below address the program status since last year's evaluation report.

1. The adult/pupil ratio was increased from 1:10 to 1:11 this year in order to provide additional educational services to a greater number of children.

2. Nine new classes were opened, three of which were special staffing situations with two aides per classroom of 22 children under the supervision of a teacher.

3. Parent-teacher conferences were continued for the third year and were viewed favorably by both teachers and parents.

4. Plans were made to hold a summer workshop for aides and teachers planning to work in differentiated staffing situations.

HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM?

Every four-year-old in the program was given the Prekindergarten Screening Evaluation in June (Summer Roundup) or September and again in May. The screening instrument tested ten objectives of the program. On the pretest, Chapter I students attained an average of four objectives. On the posttest, the average number attained was nine objectives. These results indicate that four-year-olds, as a group, mastered 90% of the objectives tested. These results are exactly the same as last year's results (see Appendix 1 for school-by-school results).

Scores from the Prekindergarten Screening Evaluation indicate excellent progress for children in the WISD prekindergarten programs. The objective related to support services was attained.

Twenty-nine schools provided the prekindergarten program and eight schools used the differentiated staffing patterns. Of the eight schools, five had classes using the differentiated staffing and classes using the traditional staffing pattern. Twenty-six schools used the traditional staffing pattern of one teacher and one aide per classroom. Results

indicate that the staffing pattern involving two aides supervised by a certified teacher was as effective, in most schools, as the traditional staffing pattern.

The sustained effects of prekindergarten students were determined by revieving kindergarten and first grade scores for students who attended prekindergarten during 1980-81. In Chapter I kindergarten, the students with prekindergarten experiences scored a month higher than comparable students with no prekindergarten experience on the ITBS Level Six.

The Chapter I first graders with PreK experience also scored a month higher than comparable students with no PreK experience.

The differences in scores of non-Chapter I students with and without PreK experience also exist. There was an advantage of 1.8 months at the end of kindergarten for PreK experienced children and by the end of first grade the advantage was a full two months for PreK experienced students. Prekindergarten education appears to enhance the future achievement of all students through grade one.

Comparison of ITBS Mean Basic Composite Scores for
Chapter I Kindergarten Students, April, 1982 and
Chapter I First Graders April, 1983

Group	ITBS Mean Composite			
	N	Grade K	N	Grade 1
PreK Experience	878	.75	739	1.9
No PreK Experience	74	.68	64	1.8

Comparison of ITBS Mean Basic Composite Scores for
Non-Chapter I Kindergarten Students, April, 1982 and
Non-Chapter I First Graders April, 1983

Group	ITBS Mean Composite			
	N	Grade K	N	Grade 1
PreK Experience	1100	1.06	700	2.4
No PreK Experience	2078	.88	1298	2.2

CONCLUSIONS

Future expansion of prekindergarten classes should include the staffing options involving two aides per twenty-two students under the supervision of a prekindergarten teacher who supervises two or more rooms. Due to the reduced cost of this staffing pattern, the prekindergarten program could be effectively expanded in a cost efficient manner. To insure that every student has the same curriculum opportunities, inservice should be provided on a regular basis for aides and teachers.

The Prekindergarten Program has continually shown itself to be effective, not only in Fort Worth, but in similar communities across the nation. Research has shown that prekindergarten prevents problems that cost society much more later on.

Appendix 1. Chapter I Prekindergarten Program School by School Prekindergarten Screening Evaluation Results, 1983-84

School	N	No. Objectives Correct in September 1983	No. Objectives Correct in May 1984	Gain in Objectives Achieved
03**	31	4.6	9.6	5.0
03	22	2.1	8.3	6.3*
07	97	4.8	9.3	4.5
08	44	2.8	8.3	5.5
09	39	1.8	8.9	7.1*
10**	31	2.4	9.3	6.9*
12	22	2.1	9.1	7.0*
14	104	2.5	8.7	6.2*
18	20	2.6	8.9	6.3*
20**	36	3.4	8.5	5.1
20	38	3.7	9.7	6.0*
23	28	4.8	9.0	4.2
25	39	3.4	9.0	5.6*
27	63	2.6	9.0	6.4*
33	21	3.6	10.0	6.4*
38	21	3.0	8.1	5.1
42	40	2.5	8.9	6.4*
43	64	4.4	9.8	5.4
50	40	3.4	9.2	5.8*
55	43	5.3	9.7	4.4
57	58	2.8	9.5	6.7*
61	40	4.3	9.8	5.5
67	66	5.2	9.7	4.5
71**	48	2.7	9.4	6.8*
71	42	3.3	9.0	5.7*
73**	62	4.0	9.4	5.4
75**	30	4.2	8.7	4.4
75	21	3.8	8.7	4.9
76	62	5.0	9.8	4.8
78**	78	3.7	9.5	5.8*
79	34	3.8	9.3	5.5
81**	42	4.3	9.4	5.1
81	42	5.1	9.4	4.3
82	84	5.3	9.5	4.2
29	1552	3.7	9.2	5.5

* Gain above district mean gain
**School with Differentiated Staffing

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